English Language requirements
Guidance for applicants

1. Introduction

To practise safely in the UK and to be entitled to be registered under the Dentists Act 1984, all dentists and dental care professionals must satisfy the registrar that they have the necessary knowledge of English.[1]

1.1 In this guidance, we set out what evidence, information or documents are to be provided for the purpose of satisfying us that you have the necessary knowledge of English when you apply for registration or restoration.

1.2 To ensure that candidates applying to sit the Overseas Registration Examination (ORE) have the required knowledge of English to complete the exam, we require evidence of language competence at the time of applying for the exam.

1.3 If we are satisfied with your knowledge of English from your initial application, we will not request anything further.

1.4 Your application will be returned as incomplete if no English language evidence has been provided.

2. Accepted English language evidence

2.1 Evidence must meet the following criteria to satisfy us that you have the necessary knowledge of English and be acceptable:

- **a.** **Skills**: your evidence must demonstrate your ability to listen, read, speak and write in English.
- **b.** **Recent**: your evidence must be no more than two years old at the time the application is submitted (with the exception of section 3 below).
- **c.** **Verifiable**: your evidence must be from a source that the GDC can readily verify.
- **d.** **Robust**: your evidence must demonstrate a level of English sufficient for safe practice in a clinical setting, equivalent to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) C1.

2.2 Set out in sections 3-7 below are the types of evidence we will ordinarily accept as demonstrating that you have the necessary knowledge of English.

3. Evidence of a UK qualification

3.1 By this we mean if you qualified from an approved programme in the UK.

3.2 We also accept a pass in the ORE Part 2. However, because we require evidence of English language competence to sit the exam, this is only usually relevant in cases

[1] Section 15(3)(ba), Section 17(d) and Section 36C(1)(b) and (6)(aa) of the Act

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where evidence submitted at the time of applying to sit the exam has expired while waiting to pass the ORE.

4. A recent English language exam at the appropriate level

4.1 Exams that meet the following criteria will be acceptable:

- **Skills**: listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills are tested.
- **Recent**: no more than two years old at the point of submission.
- **Verifiable**: the GDC must be able to verify scores directly with the test provider.
- **Robust**: the exam must test a sufficient level of English for use in a clinical setting, equivalent to CEFR C1.
- **Secure**: biometric registration of test takers, protocols against cheating and fraudulence.
- **Objective**: standardised, publicly available, assessment criteria.
- **Independent**: not owned or run by any one organisation that may have a conflict of interest with the GDC.

4.2 To support applicants in deciding which English language test to complete, we provide a table of tests we have determined meet these criteria, and the minimum scores required, on our website.

4.3 All dental professionals are required to achieve the same minimum scores.

4.4 Where test providers have alternative forms of their exam, for example Occupational English Test (OET)@Home, we will use the criteria in para 4.1 to assess their suitability to be accepted.

4.5 Where test providers offer the opportunity to re-sit one section of the test, for example International English Language Testing System (IELTS) One Skill Retake, you are permitted to retake one section within 60 days of the original result.

4.6 In general, we will not accept a combination of scores from multiple sittings of the same whole exam.

4.7 Exams are designed to be a fair and objective measure of English language ability. If you have a disability that you think might affect the outcome of the test, please contact the test provider directly to discuss what arrangements can be made.

4.8 Exams can cost varying amounts depending on the exam taken and the location you are taking it. If you are facing financial hardship, or the cost of the English language exam is a barrier, you may be able to find support with the organisations below:

- BDA Benevolent Fund
- Breaking Barriers' Language Tuition support
- Refugee Council's Building Bridges service

5. A certificate of a recent primary dental qualification, that has been taught and examined in English, from the UK government list of English-speaking countries

5.1 To be sure that a primary dental qualification has been taught and examined in English, we require it to have been achieved in a country that is included in the UK government list of English-speaking countries.

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5.2 This list can be found at www.gov.uk/english-language/exemptions.

5.3 We define recent as no more than two years old.

6. Recent clinical practice in a country where the first language is English

6.1 To ensure recent clinical practice has been in English, we require it to have been achieved in a country that is included in the UK government list of English-speaking countries.

6.2 This list can be found at www.gov.uk/english-language/exemptions.

6.3 We define recent as no more than two years old.

6.4 We define clinical practice as a clinical role in a clinical setting where you have actively interacted with patients. This does not need to have been the same role as you intend to practice in the UK.

6.5 One of the following must be provided as evidence of recent clinical practice:

a. A reference from an employer over the preceding two years detailing practice in English.

- This must be submitted using the Structured Reference Form.
- The referee must be able to confirm you have the knowledge of English necessary to practice in the UK, and provide evidence that they have witnessed you using all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in a clinical setting.
- The C1 criteria from the CEFR self-assessment grid has been used to guide the requirements of evidence in this structured reference form.
- Referees must:
  - be registered with a professional body we can verify.
  - have known you for over 12 months.
  - not be a member of your family.
- We will accept a handwritten signature, a scanned signature, or a typed signature.

b. A recent employment contract for a clinically relevant role in a country on the UK government list of English-speaking countries, alongside proof of registration in the country you been working in.

- Any contract must be from within the last two years.

7. Other types of evidence

7.1 There are ways in which you may be able to show us that you have the necessary knowledge of English for registration, other than the forms of evidence described above.

7.2 If you provide evidence other than those we have listed above, the evidence must meet the criteria laid out in para 3.1.

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8. What happens if we are not satisfied that an applicant has the necessary knowledge of English?

8.1 If having considered any evidence, information or document provided by you in support of your application, we are not satisfied that you have the necessary knowledge of English, we will request that you provide further evidence, information or documents[2], or we will direct you to undertake an English language exam from the list on our website within such period as we may specify[3].

8.2 Non-exhaustive examples of circumstances where we may request further evidence, information or documents are as follows:

- **a.** Where there is any doubt as to the authenticity of the evidence you have provided, or
- **b.** Where a primary dental qualification meets the criterion in para 5.1 above but is not recent, we may ask for evidence that you have practised dentistry for the preceding two years in a country included in the list referred to in para 5.2.

9. Expired evidence

9.1 If evidence is more than 2 years old at the point of submission, it will not be accepted.

9.2 As set out in para 1.3, we require English language evidence when applying to sit the ORE. However, we recognise that this may expire if an applicant takes more than 2 years to complete the ORE. In such cases, because we accept a pass in the ORE Part 2, this will provide sufficient evidence of English language competence, provided that the application for registration is made within two years of passing the ORE.

9.3 If evidence expires for any other reason, then new evidence that meets our criteria, i.e. no more than two years old at the point of submission, will be required.

10. Right of appeal

10.1 There is a right of appeal against a registrar's decision:

- **a.** not to register your name in the register on the grounds that you have failed to satisfy the registrar that you have the necessary knowledge of English,
- **b.** to require you to undergo an examination or other assessment,
- **c.** not to give a direction for temporary registration,
- **d.** not to restore your name to the register.[4]

11. Contact

11.1 If you are unsure about whether the evidence you have is sufficient, or have any other questions about English language requirements, please contact the registration team at assessment@gdc-uk.org.

[2] Section 15A(4) and 36CA(4)
[3] Section 15A(6) and 36CA(6)
[4] Section 25A and Schedule 2A and section 36J and Schedule 4A of the Act

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